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S E C R E T ABUJA 000312

SIPDIS

NOFORN

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SUBJECT: SHARING INFO ON CHARLES TAYLOR'S ACTIVITIES IN CALABAR

REF: STATE 11217

Classified By: CDA RICK L ROBERTS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (S/NF) February 23, CDA delivered reftel demarche on Charles Taylor's continuing efforts to influence events in Liberia to Minister of Foreign Affairs Olu Adeniji. Adeniji reiterated the GON's commitment to preventing Taylor from influencing events in Liberia, noting that the GON had warned Taylor on several occasions not to meddle in Liberian affairs. While Adeniji expressed concern over the difficulties inherent in trying to monitor Taylor's cellular and satellite phone conversations, he believed the GON had Taylor's activities under control and that he did not at the moment represent a significant threat to Liberian stability.

2. (S/NF) Overall, Adeniji seemed nonplused by the information on Taylor's recent activities provided in reftel. Reminding us that he had heard similar warnings of the dire threat posed by Sam Bouake when he was in Sierra Leone in the early 1990s, Adeniji commented that even the best intelligence "can be exaggerated." Adeniji went on to say that it was hard to believe Taylor was financing his loyalists in Liberia when his cash reserves have been so depleted that he recently considered selling his personal jet. Finally, Adeniji commented that he had been in contact with Liberian interim leader Gyude Bryant and had not heard any complaints about Taylor's influence from him. Adeniji said he would raise the issue when he sees Bryant at the upcoming AU conference in Libya.

3. (S/NF) COMMENT: We have raised the issue of Taylor's influence in Liberia on multiple occasions over the last several months, and have been met with the same GON response each time. The GON is certainly aware of Taylor's meetings with Salame in Calabar and contacts with his loyalists in Liberia. Nigerian troops are deployed to UNMIL's peacekeeping mission in Liberia, giving the GON every reason to clamp down on Taylor's activities if it thought he was a significant threat. With the GON not believing Taylor is a major threat to Liberia from Calabar, a stronger and probably different case will have to be made to the Nigerians to get them to take action against him. END COMMENT.  
ROBERTS